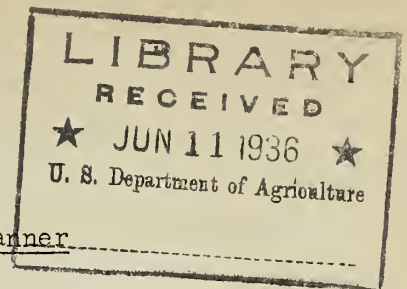


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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR



Strawberry Preserves, in the Modern Manner

A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, May 28, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: As many of you remember from past years, this is the season when we do honor to the strawberry on the Farm and Home Hour. Last year, as you recall, Miss Van Deman and Mr. Beattie enticed Mr. George Darrow away from his experimental plots out at the Beltsville Research Center long enough to come over here to the studio and talk about some of the fine new varieties of strawberries he's been developing. And I don't think anybody around this studio, including myself, has ever forgotten that great day when Miss Van Deman furnished the shortcake and Mr. Beattie brought the berries and together they threw a strawberry shortcake party right here with the grand piano as the dining table. Ruth, didn't I hear somebody asking you rather wistfully the other day whether it wasn't time to run another eating test on strawberry shortcake -- biscuit-dough versus sponge-cake variety?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh yes, I've had any number of gentle hints about that, but Everett Mitchell has taken care of that burning subject this year. He's given shortcake eaters a chance to cast their ballots, "for or agin", biscuits and sponge cake. Anyway, stern duty makes me turn a deaf ear. We've had so many questions about making strawberry preserves that I feel they must be answered.

MR. SALISBURY: Very well, if you will have a conscience, we'll try to console ourselves with the prospect of rich, red, luscious strawberry preserves to eat next winter when the snow lies deep over the strawberry patch.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's the idea. Just think of strawberry preserves as pleasure deferred, and maybe you won't have too many regrets about the shortcake.

Now, to the fine points of making preserves so that they will be a pleasure and not a disappointment when you open the jars next winter.

I've been talking to Mrs. Yeatman about her experiments on strawberry preserves and what she considers a perfect product.

To her way of thinking, these are the characteristics of perfect strawberry preserves. The color - a deep rosy red. The flavor - as much like fresh fruit as it is possible to keep in cooked berries. The shape and texture of the berries - plump and round and tender. And the sirup around the fruit - sweet and rich and clear, with here and there a seed

(over)

floating in it to let you know it comes from strawberries.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, if you can make strawberry preserves like that, and keep so much of the color and the flavor and the texture of the fresh fruit, as you say, then why does anybody go on concocting that dark brown, over-sweet stuff that sometimes passes for strawberry preserves?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Sometimes they don't have the right kind of berries to start with. You remember Mr. Darrow showed us his variety called Blakemore, developed especially for preserves. It's firm, and bright colored, and tart. Those are the requisites of a good strawberry for preserving. Then the berries must be picked and used while they're in prime condition -- not overripe or bruised and mushy. Sometimes people make the mistake of trying to salvage poor fruit by preserving it. The result is poor preserves.

Then another point on which preserve makers sometimes go wrong is the length of time they cook their preserves. They boil and boil the fruit and sugar together until the preserves are thick and overcooked. And a chemical action takes place in the pigments that give strawberries their red rosy color. They turn an unattractive dull brown. And they lose all of that delicate aromatic flavor that makes them one of the best berries in the world.

If you want to make strawberry preserves the modern way, here are the directions in brief:

As you wash and cap the berries, sort out the smaller ones and use them for making juice. That is, crush and cook these small berries for three or four minutes, then strain off the juice and measure it. To each pound of the large select berries, you will need about 1/4 to 1/2 cup of juice. Also allow 3/4 pound of sugar to each pound of the big berries. Add the sugar to the strained juice and heat slowly until the sugar is dissolved and the sirup is boiling. Then drop in the big berries and boil rapidly for about ten minutes. (By this time they will begin to look clear.) Take the kettle from the fire, and remove the white frothy scum that gathers on the top of the preserves.

Now, here's another important point. Let the berries stand in the kettle in the sirup overnight. (That gives them a chance to absorb the sirup and plump up. And by the way, use an enamelware kettle if you possibly can. Metal is likely to darken the berries.) Next morning skim the berries out of their sirup and fill into hot sterilized jars. Then boil the juice down rapidly until it is fairly thick, pour it over the berries in the jars, and seal airtight.

MR. SALISBURY: That all sounds easy as rolling off a log while you're telling it, Ruth. But if somebody wants to check up on these proportions of fruit to juice to sugar, could you send the directions?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, indeed, and we'll send along the directions for making strawberry sun preserves for good measure.